

Bus Driver, Bus Aide Shortage Challenges Delaware Schools

Like the rest of the nation, Delaware faces a school bus driver shortage. School districts and charter schools have been working hard to recruit new employees, but unfortunately report few new applicants into the field. Bus driver shortages was a challenge prior to the pandemic. Since the pandemic, the shortage has worsened because the average age of our school bus drivers puts them into higher risk categories.

As Delaware's school districts and charter schools prepare for the 2021-22 school year, local officials report the need for more drivers across the state. This staffing shortage also extends to bus aides, who assist with special transportation requirements for students. Because the timeline for getting school bus drivers properly trained and credentialed is governed by federal and state law and regulations, our school districts and charter schools are feeling intense pressure to hire staff immediately so they have staff ready for the start of the school year.

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has been working with our school district/charter school partners to support them with this challenge. DDOE continued to provide driver and aide training throughout the pandemic. The Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles is also supporting our efforts by scheduling road tests in a timely manner and accepting S endorsements from other states once the school bus drivers meet the Delaware training requirements. The state is also offering a stipend to those who complete the training and become fully licensed.

To attract more candidates, the state has increased bus driver compensation and created additional financial incentives, such as double tier and triple tier allowances to more accurately

compensate drivers that service more than one route. DDOE is developing a small group of stakeholders to explore additional opportunities that may help address or alleviate these staffing shortages, and the state's Public School Transportation Committee is continuing to evaluate the funding formula and other transportation-related issues

The media can help by publicly sharing information on school bus driver/aide requirements.

Qualifications to become a School Bus Drivers

- o Must be 18 years or older
- o Obtain a CDL
 - Individual will have to study the CDL manual and pass knowledge test at DMV to receive permit
 - Districts/Employers will provide trainers to teach the skills needed to pass the road test at DMV
- o Complete a Delaware School Bus Driver Background Check
- o Complete Child Protection Registry
- o Pre-Employment Drug Testing
- o Delaware School Bus Driver Physical (w/tb screening)
- o Complete Behind the Wheel Training
- o Attend Delaware School Bus Driver Training School 2-day class (Offered in each county monthly)
- o Disqualifying Factors
 - Not have more than five (5) points (full point value) on the applicant's three (3) year driving record. NOTE: Recalculated points and the Defensive Driving Course three (3) point credits do not apply to (S) endorsement holders in meeting this requirement.
 - Not have had the applicant's license suspended, revoked or disqualified in this State or any other jurisdiction for moving violations in the last five (5) years. This five (5) year period will begin from the date the suspension, revocation or disqualification has been cleared. Certified driving records from other jurisdictions may be requested from these applicants for the DMV to verify compliance with this

section.

-Never been convicted of any crime under the laws of this State or any other jurisdiction as specified in 21 Del.C. §2708(b)(7).

Qualifications to become a School Bus Aide

- o Must be 18 years or older
- o Attend Delaware School Bus Driver/Aide Training (Offered in each county monthly)
- o Complete a Public School Employee background check
- o Complete Child Protection Registry
- o Pre-Employment Drug Testing
- o School Bus Aide Physical (w/TB screening)

Those interested in becoming a School Bus Driver/Aide can contact the DD0E, Transportation Office at (302) 857-3390 or via email DOESchool.Transportation@doe.k12.de.us.

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